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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 000562

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PINS](#) [PTER](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: BAGHDAD: LOCAL COUNCILS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES

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[1](#)B. 2007 BAGHDAD 2040 LEGAL AMBIGUITY IN BAGHDAD
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[1](#)C. BAGHDAD 354 BAGHDAD PC CHAIRMAN FIGHTS TO STAY
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[1](#)I. 2007 BAGHDAD 3840 BAGHDAD'S SUNNI SUBURBS TO SEE
SOME SERVICES SUPPORT

[1](#)1. (U) This is a Baghdad PRT reporting cable.

[1](#)2. (U) Summary. Recent security gains and progress toward reconciliation have opened a window for greater cooperation between local councils and the authorities responsible for delivering services to Baghdad residents. As national leaders work to pass landmark legislation establishing Iraq's governance structure, Baghdad's local councils struggle with the more mundane but equally important task of coordinating the work of political and service institutions. This cable examines the role of Baghdad's local councils within the context of Baghdad's governance structure, and notes some of the initiatives launched to facilitate the councils' function as coordinating entities. End summary.

Providing local input into a centralized system

[1](#)3. (SBU) Local councils in Baghdad do not/not provide essential services. The local councils provide oversight, issue guidance, and set priorities, based on the interests of their constituents, for the local offices of Baghdad's service providing institutions -- the Amanat, national ministries and the Baghdad Provincial Council (PC). A historic legacy of Iraq's centralized state is its "stove piped" institutions reaching from the ministerial to the local level. As a result, GoI officials and elected representatives struggle to develop horizontal linkages between service institutions (such as the Amanat and national ministries) and political institutions (such as Provincial and Local Councils). Partisan politics, uncertain legal relationships, and the inexperience of many officials only compound the already significant challenges caused by the poor state of Baghdad's services infrastructure.

Baghdad's governance structure evolves

¶4. (U) In defining the role and authority of local councils, innovations under CPA law compete with traditional Iraqi policy, procedures and institutions. Local councils are political innovations created under the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) and are relatively foreign to Iraq's traditional governance landscape. CPA Order 71 (CPA 71) vaguely defines the role of provincial and local institutions, thus further muddying the already murky waters of Baghdad's uniquely complicated governance structure (refs A,B). Political factions and malign actors seek to maximize the legal ambiguity that characterizes Baghdad's governance system in order to win power and resources for themselves. The new Provincial Powers Law, if ratified, would clarify some of these conflicts and vulnerabilities in Baghdad's governance structures, but leave many issues unresolved. (NOTE: On February 26, the Executive Council returned the draft Provincial Powers Law to the Council of Representatives for further deliberation. END NOTE.) In an attempt to improve services for Baghdad's residents, the GoI thus faces challenges ranging from fundamental legal issues to operational realities such as sewer repair, trash pick-up and fixing leaky water pipes.

Council committees bring everybody together

¶5. (SBU) Confronted with these limitations, District and Neighborhood Councils have improved their performance though a committee structure that assigns each committee a specific competence. The Essential Services Committee is generally the most important committee on each council. Its purpose is

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to liaison with the Director General (DG) for each district (or "beladiya"), technical officials of the Amanat and sometimes representatives of the other service-providing ministries. The Essential Services Committee reviews the DG's performance, evaluates the district maintenance plan and prioritizes future development projects. Some councils have productive relationships with service ministry officials, but many do not. The Beladiya DG is an employee of the Amanat and many of these officials resent attempts by local council members to oversee their work, seeing them as meddling politicians rather than the public's voice.

Coordination is "THE" challenge in Baghdad

¶6. (SBU) While many officials in governance institutions claim the role of 'coordinator,' none truly exercise that function. No one ensures that all relevant entities reach agreement in identifying needs, resources and priorities. Baghdad councils attempt to assert their primacy in the coordinator role, citing CPA 71. The Amanat and ministries tout their traditional role as coordinators and point to their technical expertise and available resources. Local executive officials -- the Qa'im Makams and Mudeer Nahias of Baghdad's communities -- claim historical precedent as well as the (yet-to-be ratified) Provincial Powers Law as justification for their predominance as a coordinating force for local services.

¶7. (SBU) In addition to local and provincial struggles for influence, the national government also claims some authority in coordinating service delivery in Baghdad. The appointment of Deputy Prime Minister Salam Zobei, and then Ahmed Chalabi, to run a Baghdad Services Committee in support of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon (Operation "Rule of Law" -- the Baghdad Security Plan) caused consternation among Baghdad's provincial leaders, who felt the Prime Minister had ignored their specific responsibility for the administration of Baghdad (ref C).

Surge provides new opportunities

¶18. (SBU) Improvements in the security situation and a bottom-up push for greater political reconciliation in Baghdad, as well as USG support, have created opportunities for meaningful cooperation between and among GOI institutions (refs D,E,F). USAID's Local Governance Program (LGP) provides training and support for local council members and sponsors many initiatives intended to strengthen Iraqi governance institutions. The LGP also helped to facilitate the creation of Baghdad's Provincial Development Strategy, a five-year strategic budgeting and infrastructure plan developed by the Provincial Council in consultation with local councils, ministry officials, civil society leaders, and members of the Council of Representatives (ref G). This plan serves as a guide for other successful, on-going coordination initiatives, such as the Joint Planning Commission / Joint Reconstruction Operations Center (JPC/JROC) and others.

¶19. (SBU) The JPC/JROC brings together District Councils, Beladiya DGs, Provincial Council members, Amanat technicians, and key ministry and other GOI officials. This group shares information on planned and ongoing projects with Coalition counterparts (ref H). In turn, the JPC/JROC initiative has spawned two other GOI/USG forums that bring together key components of Baghdad's governance system -) the Joint Rural Planning Committee and the Baghdad Provincial Executive Planning Session. The Joint Rural Planning Committee (JRPC) expands the concept of the JPC/JROC initiative into the rural areas of Baghdad province. This initiative has major political implications, as these outlying communities are largely Sunni and tribal; strengthening their relationships to the central government furthers reconciliation in Baghdad province (ref I).

¶110. (SBU) The Baghdad Provincial Executive Planning Session (BPEPS) is an outgrowth of the JPC Executive Session, which began as a Coalition-only strategic forum. In a significant step forward, Baghdad's provincial leadership recently committed to participating in BPEPS, a bi-weekly strategic discussion with each other and their Coalition counterparts. During BPEPS meetings, the Baghdad Provincial Council Chairman discusses political and services-related issues with the Governor, the Mayor (or Deputy Mayor) and senior Coalition and PRT leaders (ref C).

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Comment: Helping Baghdad cope with the throes of evolution
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¶11. (U) Comment. Local councils, by themselves, cannot provide services to the residents of Baghdad. Their role is to identify and communicate local needs to the ministry and Amanat officials who do provide services, and to facilitate cooperation among these institutions. Capacity-building support from the PRTs, Embassy, and Coalition Forces can continue to develop the ability of local councils to play this important role in service delivery. Assisting Iraqis in creating productive and sustainable forums where councils effectively coordinate with other governance institutions will enable Iraqi leaders to serve its population more equitably and effectively. End comment.
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